1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



535 by a few men with kettle-drums and more with clanging brass gongs; to this babel of sound must be added the clatter of the innumerable iron neck-rings and the bracelets of the girls, and the clangour of the great bunches of bells on the buttocks of the male dancers. The whole scene is lit up by blazing torches and log fires.

535 831 Often a slight element of obscenity is introduced by one or two men dressed as tiger-men with large imitation *membra virilia* which they brandish at each other and at the women, girls and youths, rushing ludicrously here, there, and everywhere, and provoking such laughter that often the dancers have to break off their singing to join in.

535 868 There is no formal dancing teaching. Boys are allowed to join in the dances when they are about six, and girls when nine or ten. They learn simply by imitating their elders.

535 574 Men of all ages, married and unmarried, youths, boys, young wives and girls join in the Bison-horn Maria dances. There appears to be no time of year at which they are forbidden to dance, though naturally the spring and the summer, when they are freest from field-work, see most of their dancing. If at this time of year you invite villagers to dance at your camp, the throb of the drums attracts more and more men and girls from surrounding villages; for the tradition is that no invitation is needed, and that open house should be kept at a wedding or any other occasion when there will be dancing.

2. Bison-horn Maria

535 292 There is no mixing of men and girls as in the Abujhmar hills. The girls, in their ordinary finery of beads and iron and brass neck-rings, and wearing their head snoods and fillets of polished brass, have no special dancing apparatus except the *tirdudi* dancing-sticks ornamented with iron bells which they hold upright in their right hands, clashing the bells in unison by striking the ground with the butts of the sticks on their left front as they bring their left foot across in front of their right; each girl rests her left arm on the back of the left shoulder of the girl on her left. They gyrate to the right, like the Hill Marias, but the Bison-horn women have a far more rapid step; the right foot is moved to the right and slightly to the rear, and the left foot is then brought across the right leg to the right front, while the ground is struck with the butts of the jingling dancing-sticks. The girls in this way dance fast around the outside of the dancing men, sometimes singing as they go; but the unceasing throb of the men's great drums drowns their song.

535 The women's step never varies, whatever the dance; but the men have many different dances and steps, and can improvise a dance on practically any theme, such as asking for pork or *landa*. Their *pen-karsita* or Koqsar dance is a very fast, side-stepping

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria



535 dance, which makes everyone laugh, while all the mediums of neighbouring villages attend, and, possessed by their godlings, leap wildly to and fro, carrying bunches of *saja* leaves in their hands or holding them over their matted hair, to the general merriment. The chief wedding dance is the bison dance, every male turning at intervals in his paces to smile and 'glad-eye' the next dancer, and each then pretending to butt the other with his bison-horns; in another figure they similarly mimic two cocks fighting. The greatest sign of skill is to be able to impale on the tip of the horns a piece of grass twisted into a ring and thrown on the ground; the dancer may before this pretend to be a young and frisky bull, butting at wisps of grass or trees, or hurling them into the air to toss them on his horns. I have seen a dancer pick a small finger ring off the ground on the tip of his horns. As among the Hill 535 Marias, and indeed most Central Provinces Gonds, there is always 831 a comic and obscene element; men wearing black gourd masks with thick hair and beards of black bear or goat fur, and carrying clubs, nets and dummy guns, rush in and out amongst the dancers, making obscenely suggestive gestures with their clubs at the dancing or onlooking girls, and provoking roars of laughter.

[273] There is generally a pause for *landa* or *mahua* spirit sooner or later, after which the girls sometimes, before resuming the dance, sit in a bunch swaying from their hips and singing short catchy refrains, with either frankly sexual meaning or no meaning at all; and often the lads opposite make the whole company laugh by imitating them in falsetto.

The dancing and singing, it need hardly be said, lead on frequently to love-making, couples retiring into the darkness, or else starting an affair ending in experimental union and perhaps, later, in matrimony.

### *E. Other Amusements*

524 The Bison-horn Marias' favourite pastime of cock-fighting has already been described (see page 162 above). Small wooden toys are made for the children, very crude representations of tigers or [764] other animals; and a pathetic sight at the graves of children are these toys left there for the *kasal*[1] of the children to play with. I have never found any Marias making string figures; and they have 526 shown no interest in attempts to demonstrate them. The Murias and Bhattras have innumerable games in which all the village youth takes part in the cold weather and spring nights, many of which

[1] Literally the 'Gone' used of the spirits of the dead.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



585 house, and are given *landa* to drink. At the meal in the Place of the Departed the couple are exhorted by the bridegroom's father to live together in unity and concord, and to be faithful. All night the drums roll and guests pour in to dance and drink *landa* or sing around the bride and bridegroom, the men wearing their bison-horn dancing head-dresses. Ultimately next morning the couple are made to stand on a hurdle under the eaves of the hut constructed for them, and a kinsman of the girl's father climbs on the roof and tips a pot of water over them. The boy then drags the girl into the hut, both pushed by willing hands, and the door is fastened on [353] them and a bamboo-matting curtain hung over it. After a while they emerge, and the bride takes a ceremonial farewell of the girls of her village, and the guests disperse. Finally in the evening she is thrust into the bridal hut by her husband's younger brothers and his friends, her husband being already inside awaiting her.

In the account of the Ganjenar-Massenar wedding which follows, naturally no description can be given of the scenes in the *narma-lon* rooms of the bride's and bridegroom's fathers, to which outsiders are not admitted, or of other parts of the wedding ceremonies which I did not actually see. The bridegroom was the son of Atrami Hunga of Massenar, the younger brother of Atrami Kopa Dhurwa, a very influential headman who was decorated by the late Raja of Bastar for keeping that *pargana* quiet during the 1910 rebellion, and the bride was the daughter of Kunjami Harma, the headman of Ganjenar. When I reached the latter's house, which was about two miles from my camp at Massenar, the bridegroom and his party had arrived, and the relatives' dinner was over. The bride had gone to a tank to be bathed by her elder sister and her brother's wife; the bridegroom and his father were walking about talking to the guests and the bride's male relatives. There were not many persons present, perhaps 150 all told; a few men were beating their dancing drums, but none were wearing their bison-horn head-dresses. Around the door of the separate sleeping hut used [533 by Kunjami Harma's daughters and other womenfolk, some thirty ●831 women were standing shoulder to shoulder, swaying to and fro and 195] singing a choral refrain of '*Koholis-waya*' to obscene verses sung by a laughing woman in the centre of the group. Another band of women hurled abuse at them at intervals, when the leader of each band tried to out-Billingsgate the other.

535 When the bride had been bathed, she emerged from the sleeping 585 hut with a cloth wrapped over her shoulders, and was dragged into a chain of dancing and singing girls with their arms closely linked, while the bridegroom, also with a cloth over his shoulders, was [illegible] into another chain. These chains of girls circled and

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria



elder brother touched the old man's feet, and the old man touched his, and then each placed his hands on the other's shoulders, standing face to face, and leaned his head forward first on the other's right, then on his left shoulder; finally each salaamed the other with both hands held in front of his face, palm to palm, and said '*Johar!*' Each of them then exchanged similar salutations with all their near relatives present and the leading guests, including myself and the other State officials present.

The girls now started singing again, telling the bride that she must leave them and go to her man, that her lot would be hard, and that if she did not like her man she should make up her mind to leave him. Meanwhile the bridegroom slipped off over the fields to his father's house at Massenar to be ready there to receive the party escorting the bride.

The bridal procession then formed up, led by some thirty women, singing and side-stepping along the narrow jungle path in the gathering darkness. After them walked the elders, then a party of drummers, followed by the bride, pretending to struggle against a cluster of laughing girls pushing her to Massenar. All danced as they went, beating their jangling dancing sticks on the ground in time with the drums and the steps of the dance. It took them two and a half hours to cover the two miles to the bridegroom's father's house in Massenar.

There a multitude of other girls and men received them, the men all in the traditional dancing costume, with a thundering roll of drums, while dozens of bombs of gunpowder and rice chaff were exploded. The full moon beat down on a sea of tossing plumes, or shone back from the glistening bison-horns of the head-dresses, till the whole courtyard was full of rampaging and fantastic movement. The bride and bridegroom were seized by fifty girls, and made to sit in their midst in front of the house where they were later to live, all packed as closely as sardines, swaying to and fro on their hips as they sat, and singing obscene marriage songs in full-throated chorus, while all prodded and plucked at every part of the bodies of the bride and bridegroom, whose heads were muffled in cloths.

After watching this for some time I went off to my tent for dinner, but returned towards midnight. The bride and bridegroom were still where I had left them, surrounded by the swaying and singing girls. Some of these had babies sleeping in their laps as they sang, and many, tired out, were sleeping, hemmed in by their companions. The crowds had swollen, and every forest path was thronged with men and women hastening with drums and dancing kit to join the dance. Some came from villages twenty-five or

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Bison Horn Maria



585 535 thirty miles away, but showed no sign of fatigue. Around the dance many were lying already drunk, for sixty large pots of *landa* had been provided for the guests. Now and again an excited youth and girl would leave the dance and disappear in the trees. But there must always have been over two thousand men dancing; and those who had been overcome by the *landa* would return to the dance as soon as they had slept off their intoxication.

All night the drumming and dancing went on, though when I returned to the scene at 7.30 a.m. many men were lying asleep or drunk or merely resting, with piled drums and head-dresses. Now many men wearing black gourd masks with thick hair and beards of black bear's fur and carrying thick bamboo sticks, dummy guns and nets, rushed in and out among the dancers, making obscene [831] gestures with their sticks at the dancing and watching girls, to the general merriment. Looking for the bride and bridegroom, I found them, their heads still covered with the same cloths, riding on the shoulders of their sisters' husbands in the middle of a ring formed by a long chain of girls with arms outstretched and hands clasped, who headed off all the efforts of the 'steeds' to break out of the ring with their riders.

585 The fathers of the couple now decided that the time had come for the final ceremonies; the sun was getting hot, and the *landa* supplies low, for the dancers continued at intervals to leave the dance for a drink and a nap before the maddening beat of the drums called them out once again. A bamboo wicker-work hurdle was placed on the ground in front of the door of the hut where the couple was to spend its married life. To this the bride and bridegroom were led, and when they were standing on it they were at last freed from the cloths in which their heads had been enveloped for the last twelve hours. As they stood there hand in hand, the girl's father's brother climbed on to the eaves of the hut[1] with a large pot of cold and dirty water, and suddenly tipped its contents over the bride and bridegroom, whereupon, amid general laughter, the bridegroom seized the bride, and both rushed into the hut, the door of which was closed and curtained upon them. But they were allowed only ten minutes' privacy 'to discuss what they would do that night', as the bridegroom's old father explained; and even then they cannot have heard each other speak for the din of the drumming and dancing, which had not ceased for a moment even when the water was poured from the roof.

After ten minutes the bride emerged, and was surrounded by the girls of her own village, who in unison sang to her advice on a wife's duties and rights, urging her to return to them if her

[1] This is illustrated in Plate XIX. [See cat. 116, pp. 424-25, this]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

## ORGANIZATION OF THE TRIBE

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*Dewar:* O Ange, the gruel is made of broken rice.
*Ange:* O my Dewar, where are you going today?
*Dewar:* Today I am not going anywhere
For I have to load my bullocks.
Tomorrow I go to another land to trade.
*Ange:* I too will go with you to drive the laden bullocks.
*Dewar:* Don't come with me, for all know how we stand to one another.
Those who do not know us will call us brother and sister.
And when they call us that we shall be ashamed.

602 522 [831]

The relations between *samdhi* and *samdhin* are generally of an amiable, coarse and humorous nature. For men this is a drinking rather than a joking relationship, and all their lives whenever they meet they regard it as an excuse for a bottle. The women, specially as they get older, are more obscene in their conversation. They catch hold of each other's breasts, stick feathers into the private parts and exchange the coarsest jokes.

The place where this joking and fun most commonly occurs is at a marriage. 'There is no purdah in a house of marriage.' Everybody feels free to fool about; no one is going to be offended; everyone is slightly drunk.

### V. Summary

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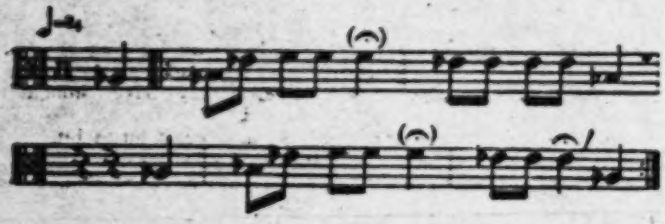
The clan and the family dominate and control Muria social life. Nothing reveals more clearly the extent of this domination than the fact that out of 2000 marriages examined no fewer than 1799 were of the cross-cousin type and, in spite of every temptation to the contrary, 1884 out of 2000 boys married according to their parents' wishes. This could only happen in a society which had a strong regard for its own organization and laws.

The clan system retains its vitality both as an exogamous unit and as a means of organizing its members round the clan-god and the memory of the Departed. Clan festivals remain great and notable occasions. The clan system, as a study of marriage statistics will show, continues to regulate betrothal and marriage. The *samdhi* relationship, as may be seen in every song and story, continues to be of the first importance. Clan traditions still regulate funerary rites and memorial customs. Totemism is less important, but is still far from moribund. The whole complex of ideas and customs is greatly confused, but the very confusion is perhaps a sign of its vitality.

## THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Chhind ṭāṛi ke mauṛ dai,* | Of palm leaves is the crown, mother. |
| *Main mauṛ bāndho dai?* | May I wear the crown, mother? |
| *Kāy mola debe bābu?* | What will you give me, son? |
| *Gaḍuri ke rupiya dai,* | I'll give you a bundle of money, mother, |
| *Kotha ke baila dai,* | I'll give you a bullock in the stall, mother. |
| *Wahi baila debe bābu.* | Give me that bullock, son. |

Here is a rather charming little song, which was recorded at Palari.

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Bāri hata chhind buda rati rati kande* | The palm grows near the fence and cries all night. |
| *Na kānd re chhind bata bābu mauṛ pinde,* | Don't cry, O palm, my son will wear you as a crown, |
| *Bāndo le bāndo ṭujāri chatuk mauṛ bāndo.* | Tie O tie it, priest, carefully tie the crown. |

### *Bringing in the Manda Wood*

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Now the chelik of Sidhawand, assisted by visiting chelik from other villages, went out with the Gaita to fetch wood for the marriage-booth. The Gaita cut a small mahua tree with a single blow of his axe, and the boys cut the other poles and leafy branches of sarai wood. Presently the party returned, drumming, dancing and singing, with loud shouts of *Pude* (vagina).[1] It was now nearly sunset. The boys piled the wood in the place where they were going to build the booth, and danced round it holding each other's hands. The sutiari came and picked up the mahua tree. They stood in a bunch very close together, everyone held the tree and banged it up and down, singing vigorously.

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While the wood was being brought in the girls sang taunt-songs at the boys, most of them obscene. The first, for example, has the refrain *Kerad kāying barka mahing ferlatuk chete ner layor*, 'The chelik's testicles are like the fruit of a dried-up tree and the root of a gourd; his penis is like a snake'.

[1] Risley describes a festival of Dharti Mai among the Mal Paharia. 'The dancing party shout continually *kur, kur* (*pudendum muliebre*), a mode of invocation believed to be especially acceptable to the goddess. In this somewhat indelicate cry we may perhaps see a barbarous and undisguised reference to the *vis genetrix naturae* so prominent in many early forms of belief.'—H. H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1891), Vol. II, p. 72.

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

### *Songs*

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Layor tatle manda ri sango;* | The boys are bringing the boughs on their heads; |
| *Maksi manda tator ri sango,* | Secretly they have brought the wood, |
| *Buching poynāh kāhlor ri sango.* | They have cut it bit by bit. |
| *Māke marsi hewer ri sango,* | If they would give us axes, |
| *Chhak ne mando haderāl sango.* | We'd cut the wood with a single blow, |
| *Mamāl manda tawerāl sango.* | And we would bring the wood in. |

In the next song, the boys sing the first three lines and the girls answer.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Mando deri kokoti wākoti soy bai.* | The pole of the booth is crooked, girl. |
| *Tumcho vati chepati roy soy bai.* | Your vagina is like a chapati, girl. |
| *Jhelun dānka netu roy soy bai.* | We will dance jumping up and down, girl. |
| *Tumcho asan vatu roy soy dāda.* | If we were to do it instead of you, brother. |
| *Jhelun dānka netu roy soy dāda.* | We would dance jumping up and down, brother. |
| *Gāra phāndun netu roy soy dāda.* | We would yoke the cart and take it away, brother, |
| *Kukra bāsti netu roy soy dāda.* | At cock-crow we would take it away, brother. |
| *Kānde tangia dhartu roy soy dāda.* | We'd put axes on your shoulders, brother. |
| *Bāchun deri mārtun roy soy dāda.* | We'd bring a straight pole, brother. |
| *Kokta bāhta deri roy soy dāda.* | We'd never cut a crooked pole, brother. |

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[831]

There are other songs which I need not quote, in which there is much play about crooked wood and the crooked penis, and the penis which can dig well in intercourse but cannot dig a hole for the pillar of the booth.

The boys had hidden a pice somewhere in the wood, and the girls spent a long time looking for it. Finally, about 7-30 p.m., the Gaita put some rice on the spot where the motiari had danced with the mahua tree, and dug a hole with his iron digging-stick. If white-ants or stones are found there, they move to another spot, offering an egg and chicken to whatever god the Siraha decides was responsible for the ill omen. But all was well today. The Gaita broke a coconut on his digging-stick, and the chelik planted the centre-pole of the booth and the mahua tree in the hole that the Gaita had made. After drinking a little liquor, the chelik then proceeded to make the booth (*manda*).

This was a very simple affair. Nine sarai poles were placed in a rough square, in the middle of which was the centre-pole and the mahua tree.[1] On the centre-pole a small representation of the vagina is often carved. A roof

[1] A number of tribes put the mahua in the marriage-booth. The Omanaito do (Thurston, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 444), so do the Birjhia (Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 332), the Sonkar of Chhattisgarh (ibid., Vol. III, p. 316), and the Bathya or Rithya (Dalton, op. cit., p. 148). Mock marriages to the tree are performed by the Bagdi, the Kurmi, the Mahli and no doubt others (*Census of India, 1911. Report for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, pp. 328ff). The Gond of Mandla put a mango tree in the centre of the booth, but elsewhere use a post made of mahua wood (Wand, op. cit., p. 138).

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Hēna duma la hēna duma la dosi.* | Put it for the Departed, Dosi. |
| *Māta māuli la māta māuli la dosi.* | For Mata Maoli, Dosi. |
| *Jan bisarbe jan bisarbe dosi.* | Do not forget, Dosi. |
| *Tore dharam jo tore dharam jo dosi.* | It is your duty, Dosi. |

### *Further Anointing of the Bridegroom*

585 Now his own motiari carried the bridegroom out again and brought him to the *manda*. They danced round the booth, one of them carrying him on her back, till they were tired. Then they made him sit on a motiari's lap on a bamboo fan to the west of the booth and outside it, and put a fan between his hands which he held folded before his face. Again they put haldi, making it 'climb' up his body. The bride's brother's wife came and wept loudly, saying, 'Never forget us and the love we've had for you. Come and see us often. Don't trouble our poor girl. She is ignorant and foolish, but you will be able to teach her. Let her come and see us often'.

This tedious and exasperating ritual continues during the whole ceremony. Every relative in turn must perform it over and over again.

### *Songs*

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Dāda indān he dāda!* | Cry brother, brother! |
| *Dharmu telu chaga wo dāda.* | Anoint with holy oil, brother. |
| *Tuhe dharam lāge de dāda.* | This is your gift, brother. |
| *Bai indān he bai!* | Cry sister, sister! |
| *Dharam telu chaga wo bai.* | Anoint with holy oil, sister. |
| *Tuhe dharam lāge de bai.* | This is your gift, sister. |

And so on, interminably, through the entire table of affinity.

2

| | |
|---|---|
| *Tiloke telo telo wo dai!* | O the oil of til, mother! |
| *Mola re telu chada wo dai.* | Let me rub the oil, mother. |
| *Tola re telu charēten wo beta,* | I would rub you with oil, son, |
| *More re buta kaney jo beta.* | But I have work to do, son. |
| *Sagore din he buta wo dai,* | You can work every day, mother, |
| *Yehe re din he tele wo dai.* | But this oil is just for today, mother. |
| *Tore re buta rahe wo dai.* | Leave your work, mother. |
| *Mola re telu chada wo dai.* | And rub me with oil, mother. |

3

[831]

| | |
|---|---|
| *Kis koce kowe layon eh he.* | The chelik is a little monkey. |
| *Kene porro targa kowe eh he!* | Climb up, O little monkey! |
| *Gokāle dudo kowe eh he!* | Her breasts will fill your fists! |
| *Kene dor raiya kowe eh he!* | Come down again, O little monkey! |
| *Rāpāle pudo kowe eh he.* | Her vagina is big as a spade, O little monkey! |

4

This song is from Bayanar village, a Paskana Pata for the anointing. The refrain imitates the noise of a goat in heat.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

## THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

*Sai lo lo bo bo bo! Sai lo lo bo bo bo!*

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O young darling, whence have you come,
Have you come for the play of love,
With an ox-goad under the mango tree?
Why have you come, big-breasted love?
I will catch you and enjoy you.
Saikobai, why have you come?
Your pubic hairs are like a shrub in Amgaon.
We were yoked together in the ghotul.
Now you are going, and I bid you farewell.
Now you are leaving the ever-thrilling ghotul.
I took you under the pipal tree and shook you to and fro.
By the ant-hill I tumbled you.
Your ghotul lover has come for you,
But no longer are you there to welcome him.

### *Taking the Omens*

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Now the final omens must be taken. The Gaita placed an earthen pot full of water on the verandah of the headman's house, and dropped grains of rice two by two into it. For a successful marriage the grains must meet tip to tip. If they meet crosswise, there will be quarrels; if they both sink, the married pair will die together in a year; if they do not meet at all, the girl will elope with someone else. On this occasion, the two grains sank to the bottom, and the headman sent round an inquiry whether any of the near relatives of the bride had just begun to menstruate—a calamity which had previously been known to disturb the omens. At about the same time the bridegroom fell into a trance, twitching, shivering, stretching himself and then falling inert to the ground. Apparently none of the women were in the tabooed condition and the bridegroom's mother—a managing woman with an enormous bun of hair on the top of her head which caused some to regard her as an incarnation of the Hindu god Mahadeo—thought quite obviously that it was I with my camera who was causing all the trouble, but did not like to say so. After a time, however, when the Gaita had made some extravagant promises to the gods, the boy recovered and the rice grains floated round and hit each other most properly tip to tip.

### *Filling the Kalsa*

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The little kalsa-pitcher, which is to be placed by the mahua tree in the marriage-booth, must be filled with rice. The motiari put a basket before the bride. They place the pot inside and fill the bride's hands with rice, covering them with a cloth. Several of them catch hold of her hands and move them up and down above the kalsa, singing *Rolo*, until all the rice has fallen into the pot. When the pot is full the motiari stand up with a loud cry of *Sai!* (penis).

### *Songs*

I

| | |
|---|---|
| *Nanki kata dotola barka Mallu latola.* | The reeds grow by the river, where the old bear lies. |
| *Kike jillo latola dulhi le latola.* | With whom is he lying? He's lying with the bride. |

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## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

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831

*Kai pila holi bhālu pila hole.*
Whose was the child? It was a bear's child.

*Kāke buba balede dulha ke buba balede.*
Whom will he call father? The bridegroom.

*Kāke āya balede dulhi ke āya balede.*
Whom will he call mother? The bride.

*Kai rāg men gāge de hur hur balede.*
To what tune will she weep? *Hur hur.*

*Ama pān chiro chāro.*
The mango leaf sounds *chiro charo.*

*Dulha chotli kira paro ach.*
There are maggots in the bridegroom's penis

*Mande pude kurri.*
Loudly cry 'Vagina'.

2

*Goti roy dodon banjāra aya!*
O the Banjara's bullock, mother!

*Noni bona roy sudha dāki noni?*
With whom will you go, girl?

*Māma na marri mantor go āya.*
There is my *māma's* son, mother.

*Noni miya jori pobe roy noni.*
He's not fit to be your mate, girl.

*Ona roy sudha hanma roy noni.*
Do not go with him, girl.

*Gere mara jori roy ade jori pibo.*
He is as bad as a pair of gere trees.

*Ona re suda hanon roya āya.*
I will not go with him, mother.

*Aich mande pude kaudi bandhla.*
Under the booth is a vagina tied with a cowrie.

*Dudhe handi bhurza.*
And breasts like a brown pot.

*Leka cho chotli bhurza!*
O the penis of the brown boy!

*Ama pān siro sāro.*
The mango leaves sound *siro sāro.*

*Leki cho pudi kira paro kurri.*
The girl's vagina is full of maggots.

585
[531]
Before the kalsa-pitcher is put in its place by the central pillar of the booth, it is decorated, sometimes beautifully and with great elaboration. Red, yellow and black grain is stuck with cow-dung in varied patterns, or stars and lines of dots are made in white and black. While two of the older women are doing this, the motiari stand by and sing.

*Song*

585
539
*Riri loyo ri ri lo rilo ri ri loyo ri ri lo ri ri lo ri ri loyo ri ri lo*

*Ursa wenjing karsa wo dai.*
The pot is decorated with rice, mother.

*Nena karsa kotikān dai.*
I place a mark on the pot, mother.

*Bāti wenjing kotikin bābu?*
With what kind of rice will you decorate it, boy?

*Hinga wenji kotikān dai.*
I will use *hinga* rice, mother.

*Bona suda kotikin bābu?*
With whom will you decorate it, boy?

*Atin miyār manta roy dai.*
With my *māmi's* daughter, mother.

*Tāna suda kotikān dai.*
I will decorate the pot for her, mother.

*Tāna suda parwin roy bābu.*
You won't be able to do it for her, boy.

*Tāna jorti āyuri roy bābu.*
She is no fit mate for you, boy.

*Tāral tamor biti roy bābu.*
She has brothers, boy.

*Hedār bhai biti roy bābu.*
She has sisters and brothers, boy.

*Awa bābo biti roy bābu.*
She has a mother and father, boy.

*Nāhun erik wāla wo dai.*
But I am willing, mother.

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

### *The Midday Dance*

585 Then the chelik gathered round the booth and began to dance, holding
539 each other's hands swinging backwards and forwards to a rather dismal tune, as they circled slowly round.

*Songs*

1

| | |
|---|---|
| *Têra wo dai nâwa sono pungâri.* | Give me my golden flower, mother. |
| *Nâwa iga to hile nuni niya bubân nigâdu.* | I haven't got it, your father has it, son. |
| *Têra wo buba nâwa sono pungâri.* | Give me my golden flower, father. |
| *Nâwa iga to hile nuni niya dâdân igâdu.* | I haven't got it, your brother has it, son. |
| *Têra wo dâda nâwa sono pungâri.* | Give me my golden flower, brother. |

—and so on, taking the names of every relative present.

2

| | |
|---|---|
| *Walâldâti koliyâl walâlta?* | Where are you going, fox, where are you going? |
| *Chilhodâl wayâl hilu jo têna toka tun hopur pandhal.* | Make a broom of a squirrel's tail. |
| *Walâldâti nirâl wâlâlta?* | Where are you going, leopard, where are you going? |
| *Chilhodâl wayâl têna tâlla tun hudwo pandarâr.* | Make a measure of the head of a rat. |

585 It was now midday and the visiting motiari brought food to the booth as reward for the boys who had gone to fetch the wood the previous day. The boys sat down in a wide circle round the booth and the girls served them with rice and vegetables on leaf-plates. When they had finished the chelik got up and down three times shouting 'Penis!', and so dispersed.

When darkness fell everyone went home for the evening meal. The headman provided pork for his visitors: the pig was knocked over the head with a rice-pounder and the Gaita offered the carcass mahua-spirit saying, 'Let there be enough flesh for us all and some left over'.

Throughout the night there was singing and dancing; every now and then the weary bride and groom were brought out to be anointed, from the feet upwards to the head.

[533 The company drank, and made merry with feminine songs, for 'there
● 831] is no purdah in a house of marriage'. Much of the dancing during the night and a large part of the day was done without drums in almost Hill Maria style. Boys, or boys and girls, held hands and moved slowly round the marriage-booth in a wide circle. The singing was monotonous, but the songs themselves are often more interesting than those concerned merely with details of the ritual.

## THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

585 with the water, caught her and spat again in her mouth. Motiari gave him another gourd of water and he passed it on to his bride; she twice filled her mouth and spat all over him.

Now the motiari gathered round and undid the plaits of hair that had been tied during the wedding.

*Song*

585 *Sura beri sakāli sakāli he buba,* There are seven links in my plait,
*Nana sakal lehika lehika he buba.* I am going to undo the links.
539 *Bona lārne lehika lehika he buba?* For whose love will you undo it?
*Sātu jor dāda lor dāda lor he buba;* I have seven brothers;
*Dādān lārne lehika lehika he buba.* For love of my brothers I will undo it.
*Bārāng his lehika lehika he buba?* What will you give before you undo it?
*Dobir bhainsi hiyāka hiyāka he buba,* I'll give a buffalo from my herd.
*Tāne yise hema roy hema roy he buba,* Don't give a buffalo,
*Dobir hinja poyor roy poyor roy he buba.* Or the herd will be desolate.

585 When the hair was undone, the motiari combed it, and then bride and groom threw water and rubbish over each other. They needed a bath and the motiari poured water over them.

Then two motiari sat down presenting little laps for ritual occupation. The boy sat down, and the bride came to sit in his lap. She stayed there a moment, then jumped up and hit him on the back. Then she sat down, and he prepared to sit in her lap. But at the right moment she wriggled aside and he tumbled to the ground amid roars of laughter. But he jumped up and hit her two or three times with his clenched fist.

The fun now became general. Chelik filled their mouths with water and blew it over the motiari. The girls filled leaf-cups with cow-dung and spilled it over the chelik. Meanwhile the Gaita's wife collected the haldi-stained clothes of bride and groom; someone brought out a pot and went round begging for fire. He pushed handfuls of rubbish against private parts saying, 'Set them on fire!' At last they put the pot on the fire and boiled the clothes. But they were soon brought out and tied in a bundle. The Gaita poured a little liquor on the four corners and they lifted up the bundle seven times. Bride and groom undid the wet clothes and threw them over each other. [831] Someone pretended to be a Ganda with a large imitation penis and went round trying to sell the clothes.

At last the Gaita caught hold of the married pair and dragged them into the house for a well-earned meal, which they took together in ceremonial state.

### *The Last Rites*

The marriage is over but a curious and interesting rite remains. Bride and bridegroom go for one last visit to the ghotul. The bride first massages her husband and then every boy in turn. The chelik send the husband off to his house, and a little later tell the girl to follow him. When she refuses three or four of them take her by force, push her into the room with her husband and shut them in. I have seen this done at Malakot and Nayanar. I will describe the Malakot incident here.

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cane was not stolen, but was given by the husband in compensation for taking a girl away from the ghotul.

As they escort the newly married pair to bed the boys and girls sing a characteristic song.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Dulha cho māndo dulha cho māndo,* | In the bridegroom's booth, |
| *Parewāro jhulete.* | Swings the pigeon. |
| *Dulhi cho māndo dulhi cho māndo,* | In the bride's booth, |
| *Tondha lotesa lō buha lō.* | The lizard copulates and copulates. |
| *Pillah bhāji mane re leka bhāji hundāy jai re leka.* | Spinach is drying on a leaf. |
| *Jore jore tenda bane se re leka tenda pāni nāhin tire re leka.* | There is a pair of weighted balances (of a well), but he won't use them. |
| *Palārigaon cho jaliya gānja,* | The long-tailed cock of Palari, |
| *Dongrigura cho kāri koni,* | The black hen of Dongrigura, |
| *Dandik chathi abbick dahi.* | Every moment they want to copulate. |

When everything was over, at Sidhawand the headman and the village elders purified the village from any possible evil introduced by the many visitors. They sprinkled liquor round the houses and offered a chick to the Village Mother.

### V. The Navanar Marriages: A Different Procedure

Such was the marriage ritual at Sidhawand and Malakot. I believe that a very similar procedure is followed all over eastern Bastar. We must now take a brief glance at the other type of marriage, where the main ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house and where a number of minor details differ.

The marriage I am now to describe was celebrated at Amasara and Nayanar on 15 April 1941 and the following days. On the first evening the bride was prepared as at Sidhawand. Her motiari sat round her all night, weeping and consoling her. The next morning the bridegroom, escorted by his chelik and motiari, came to Amasara to fetch her. On the way, at the village boundary, the Gaita made the usual line of ash and offered liquor in three saja leaves, saying, 'Let there be no trouble and no quarrels. Let us return in safety'. They stepped over the line and went on their way, none looking back.

#### *The Farewell Ceremonies*

Both parties cooked separately out-of-doors in the fields. During the day there was the usual application of haldi, weeping, exchange of presents and some heavy drinking. When I reached Amasara on the afternoon of this second day, I found a scene of great animation. Several groups of boys were dancing with mandri drums; in another part of the field rows of girls were dancing and singing Reis. Another group of motiari in boy's clothes, with moustaches and turbans, were preparing for the Jhoria Bindanna when the bridegroom has to recognise his bride amidst a group of dancing motiari disguised as boys, an incident which I study fully in Chapter XVI. In the middle sat a row of old women, mandhi to each other, their bodies covered with haldi-water and singing drunkenly.

It was getting late and presently the bride's parents went to the boy's people and said, 'Now you are our daughter's mother and father; we are giving her

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585 to you'. At this the girl went weeping to her friends and gave them little keepsakes. As evening fell, the party left the village. Bride and bridegroom walked most of the way, but whenever they came to a field the chelik carried them across, and they threw pulse and rice onto the ground in honour of the Earth Mother. In Telanga, the bride had to cross a stream. She brought two aonra rings and threw them left and right as she went over in honour of the Water Maiden (Yer Kanyang) for she too was still a maiden.

The bride was brought to her new house rather late at night, but her mother-in-law received her, washing her feet and giving her a kindly welcome. In Telanga, the boy's motiari made the girl stand on a new mat covered with peacock's feathers for this greeting.

### *Bringing in the Manda Wood*

At about 10 p.m. the chelik of Nayanar and visiting villages went to bring the boughs for the marriage-booth. After the Gaita had cut the mahua tree, food was given to the boys and they had supper there in the jungle. They returned to the village, dancing and drumming, shouting *Kiddar-pude* continually. A number of women waiting in the court of the house tried to stop them entering, but the manda branches were full of red ants, and the boys scattered these over the women and dispersed them. Then they danced banging the branches on the ground till the courtyard and road was alive with the ants; they chased any girl they saw, and rained a stinging shower over her.

The booth was hastily erected; there were only four poles and no brooms tied at the top. A rope of paddy straw was tied round and a string of mango leaves. The important thing to notice is that this booth was put up inside the courtyard of the house—I saw the same thing at Telanga—and this completely altered the whole ceremony: the grand procession of the Lagir became obviously impossible.

Now weary and bitten all over with red ants I went to bed. I am told that the party danced and drank all night; I can well believe it, they looked jaded enough next day.

Early the following morning, the Rawat's wife as usual dug up a little earth, [331] but here there was no chasing of a motiari. An old woman put the earth in her sari and tied it over her buttocks, afterwards letting it fall in a very vulgar manner. As they returned the girls took grass from the thatch of a house and put it in their hair; later they stuck it in the centre pole of the booth.

### *The Worship of the Drums*

This rite, which does not seem to be known in eastern Bastar, is very important in the central parganas. Before beginning to dance, the chelik put three mandri and a wooden gong together on the ground. The two leaders of the ghotul removed their turbans, made a small pattern of rice-flour and offered liquor to Tallur Muttai, Lingo and the Departed. Then four other boys caught hold of the drums and at a given signal picked them up all together with a loud cry, while other boys pulled the 'priests' over backwards. Only after this could the chelik dance. As visiting villages arrived the chelik marched up the road, with grand and triumphant drumming, and worshipped their drums in the same place.

The usual rites are now performed; the interminable application of haldi, the taking of omens, the tying of the plaits, the bathing of bride and groom.

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585 towards the end, I did not once see them strained or quarrelsome. Their
883 tremendous vitality kept the thing on the move and made everyone cheerful and happy.

In return for all this work, the chelik and motiari seem to get very little, one meal a day and a little liquor. The bride and bridegroom distribute small keepsakes, rings and beads. The motiari of the bride's ghotul demand and receive four annas as *mundi*-cowrie. The chelik also demand a new mandri drum from the bridegroom in compensation for the loss of one of their girls. They are generally given eight annas instead. This present is called *sakta*. The boy also has to give *chitkul*-cymbals, or four annas, to his own chelik.

People treat the chelik and motiari with great respect, for there is great fear of offending them—a strike, which is not unknown, can upset the entire proceedings. It is

[301]

DETAIL

Fig. 23. *Chapali-mundi* necklace, from Kuntpadar, of red, white and blue beads
*Length 3' 5"*

[831] noteworthy also that there is no exchange of obscenities between the older people and the ghotul members. When the old women smear their dirty hands on all available male faces, catching hold of their private parts or pouring haldi over their buttocks, they never do it to the chelik. It would be considered equally shocking for a married man to poke his stick at a motiari

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585 182 importance of the Muria bath is emphasized by the use of the winnowing-fan (universally important in magic) to fan and drive away all risk of evil.

The red ants scattered over the marriage party are perhaps intended merely as a joke; they may, however, represent a survival of some former custom of ordeal. In British Guiana a man before marriage had to show his fitness for it by allowing himself to be sewn into a hammock full of fire ants.[1]

Yet to the participants in the marriage it is probable that its financial and social aspect is of even greater importance than the supernatural atmosphere into which they have projected themselves. The alliance of the two families is emphasized by the little rite of *samdhi-bhet* at the very beginning and by the farewell of the new relations-in-law at the end. Their prayer—'Let there be no quarrels. Let there be many children. As the root is below and branches above, so may we be united'—and again—'See, from of old was our relationship ordained. May the Departed guard and continue it'—indicates the importance of the ceremony for the family, the clan and the ancestors. This is still further shown by the presents made to various relatives and, above all, by the gifts offered to the Departed—to the Pot in the old home to compensate the ancestors for the loss of a girl, to the Pot in the new family to indicate that the bride has left her old clan and joined that of her husband.

But it is not only family and village that the motiari must now desert; she has to leave her ghotul. So gifts and compensations are given: there is a feast, a farewell massage, and marriage-crowns are often put up on the ghotul pillar. Bride and groom bid ceremonial farewell to their old companions as they set out for their new home.

So far we have dealt mainly with rites of parting and separation: other ceremonies stress the social and sexual union of bride and groom and attempt to ensure its natural fertility. The giving of the bridal ring is a world-wide symbol of union, so is the ceremony of eating together. At the end of the Lagir circumambulation (itself a rite of aggregation with a subsidiary cathartic or prophylactic purpose[2]), bride and groom are tied together and water is poured over them. On two occasions, the bridegroom or his friends carry off the bride; this may be a survival of an older tradition of marriage by capture or may merely be intended to stress the emphatic break with the old life and entry into the new.

582 182 ●831 The sexual interest is both manifest and latent. There is little concealment or symbolism about the ceremonial bedding of the married pair, the vagina carved on the main pillar of the booth, the obscene horseplay between relatives, the constant cries of 'Penis' and 'Vagina', the songs, the jokes, the abuse. In such sexual jokes, says W. G. Archer, 'is a release of repressed energy which when applied to the marriage must necessarily make it fertile'.[3]

Other of the incidents and objects in the ritual are of a symbolic character. Some are directly sexual: thus the motiari bang the mahua branch up and down on the site of the booth just as Bison-horn Maria girls use their dancing-sticks, professedly in imitation of sexual intercourse. The pouring of water over bride and groom is a symbol of world-wide distribution, and the breaking of wooden poles links up with many examples given by Westermarck,[4] where

[1] Sir E. F. Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana* (London, 1883), p. 221.
[2] Westermarck, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 513ff.
[3] *The Wedding of the Writers*. And Westermarck says, 'The sexual indulgence of the wedding guests may, on the principle of homœopathic magic, be a means of assisting bride and bridegroom in achieving the reproductive aims of their union'.—Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 502.
[4] Westermarck, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 437.

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585 182 things are broken to ensure or facilitate the consummation of the marriage. The Berber blow a cane to pieces. The Zulu bride breaks a spear. Among the Yakut dry rods are broken and burnt.

● 831 Haldi, with its yellow colour, is both a ghost scarer and a sex-symbol. It is significant that one of its forty-six ancient synonyms is *kamala*, 'lustful' and others refer to it as 'night'.[1] The oil with which it is mixed is, to the Muria mind at least, another sex-symbol, recalling the oil used in massage and that traditionally put on a lover's mat 'to make it slippery'.

Other objects are concerned more with the fruit of intercourse, for the fertility so carefully avoided in the ghotul is now passionately desired. The kalsa-pitcher is an obvious symbol of the womb: it is filled with fertile grain and a lamp (which stands for the act of love in folk-poetry as in Pahari paintings) covers its mouth. The arrow is another obvious sex-symbol[2]; the very interesting song on p. 119 connects the marriage arrow with the arrow used to cut the umbilical cord of the first child: here too the kalsa-pitcher becomes the pot from which the mother is bathed during the ceremonial uncleanness of the puerperium. The decorations of the booth, the strings of mango leaves so green and fertile, the coconut, the grain, the burning lamps, all hint at love and love's fruit. Even the curious rite where the bride and groom throw away their toilet-twigs and spit at each other may aim at ensuring union and productiveness. Most obvious of all the symbols are those connected with earth, for woman is everywhere the earth whom man must plough and sow.

585 182 The incidents and furniture of a Muria marriage, therefore, have not come together by chance. They are purposeful and charged with meaning. They express in vivid and dramatic form the working of the Muria mind. There could hardly be a more emphatic means of bringing home to a young couple their social, sexual and domestic union.

[1] See *N.I. Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, p. 39.
[2] Westermarck gives many examples, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 490; so does Archer, *The Blue Grass*, pp. 172ff.

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887 goes to the market and attends the festivals, though there is not so much for her in these as for the men. But her real hour of happiness is at a marriage. Here she may lay aside restraint and recapture the abandon of youth. Now she may drink heavily and for a few hours in blissful intoxication free herself of inhibitions and forget all that is tiresome and weary in her life. If the older men enliven the marriage scene with their buffoonery, [522 the older women divert it with their obscenity. There is nothing that they ● 831] may not say, little they may not do. Their songs and their dance movements are outrageous and never fail to rouse laughter in the crowd.

888 In a very few cases Muria women grow riggish in old age. They adorn themselves with many ornaments and wear bright-coloured saris. This behaviour is not approved.

You are an old woman,
Forget your dances.
You are an old woman,
Yet on your buttocks is a tiny cloth
And flowers are in your hair.

Although there is a rule that women should never use their ghotul titles after marriage, when a group of old women who have grown up together in the same ghotul meet in later life, they usually use the old names in order to awaken happy memories of the past. I am told that then they exchange reminiscences through half the night and that such times are among the happiest of their lives.

886 As elsewhere in aboriginal India, the climacteric does not appear to be dreaded or even to be specially noticed. In India, women are old at 45 and they greet the cessation of the menstrual period with relief that they are now saved from its embarrassments. I have not been able to find any myth about the climacteric; there does not seem to be any rule about it or any desire to avert it. It is a purely natural phenomenon. 'The stream that flowed so long is dry', 'the old tree has begun to wither'. Some people believe that the tree withers because 'no one goes to an old woman,[1] so her vagina has no grain to eat; no rain falls in her stream, so how can it flow?'

## II. Death and the Ghotul

761 The ghotul is a place of separations. But when a chelik or motiari dies
883 there is a special feeling of sorrow, a sense of outrage, the conviction that something exceptional and abnormal has occurred. Sometimes the ghotul is closed for three days; where it is not closed the children gather sadly and there is no singing and there should be no intimacies. When older people die the dormitory is not closed. 'The ghotul is the *Dinde-mahdl*, the Palace of the Unmarried. As the Raja's Palace is not shut when people die in the town, neither is ours. But if two or three of the chelik and motiari die, then we shut it.' At Dongrigura, they said that when a chelik died, the motiari wept and next day initiated one of the younger boys and gave him the dead chelik's title, so that there might be no gap in their fellowship. When the Subedar died, they made his little brother Subedar next day and gave him as 'husband' to the Subedarin, his *anga*, or elder brother's 'widow'.

The death of a chelik or motiari is always abnormal. The death of a little child or of a child in the womb is no less unnatural. 'Just as in a field, rice

[1] A rather cynical proverb runs: 'How disgusted is a man who eats stale food in the morning and goes to bed with an old woman at night.'

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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## THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: AGE

| | |
|---|---|
| *Angār mute rāni re.* | Angar Mute is the Rani. |
| *Yar muyuli kilandu re.* | Weeping, she is bathing in the water. |
| *Jhāro jhāro kilandu re.* | As she weeps the tears fall. |
| *Pitāmaro Dhoti re!* | O her silken cloth! |
| *Dhoti tune kavandu re.* | She looks at her cloth. |
| *Tōna dudong āteka re?* | How can we describe her breasts? |
| *Mākha kāyāng dudo re.* | Her breasts are as the bel fruit. |
| *Ghāttam tikeda wāndung re.* | From the bathing-place she is coming home. |
| *Lonz tike kavdung re* | In the house |
| *Mul gathe mānā re* | There are so many relatives |
| *Sanju banju kile re.* | That we cannot count them. |

The rest of the song describes Angar Mute's court, to which comes the Pargana Manjhi with small legs, his spear over his shoulder, a big-bellied Kotwar and many other officials. The Manjhi delivers judgement, giving a hundred rupees to the Raja and only a pair of bullocks for the Muria. 'One of the bullocks had no tail, the other had no horns.' Then the chelik and motiari who have escorted the corpse to the burial ground are described. There are sixty boys led by Kosi Leyur and sixty girls led by Gara Karre Mode, the Belosa of the ghotul, whose vagina is sixteen cubits long and whose pubic hairs are five cubits long. 'A jungle boar could roll in her vagina.' The boys break her bangles and push the pieces into her navel with a *jharar jharar* noise.

All this, which seems merely coarse to us, is exceedingly amusing to the Muria; the song is really a comic effort intended to relieve the tension of the funeral now that the main rites are done.

### VI. Divining the Cause of Death

It is always important at a funeral to discover the cause of so monstrous and unnatural a thing as death. At Binjhli, when magic is suspected, they halt the bier before it reaches the burial ground and the Siraha medium recites a string of names of suspected persons. When the name of the guilty man is mentioned, the bier moves forward violently of its own accord. This method, which resembles the use of an Anga clan-god for divination, is common throughout the State, and Grigson has recorded a similar, though more elaborate, rite in use among the Hill Maria.[1]

At Kelalakot, the Muria remove some locks of the dead man's hair and a little earth from beneath his head. They make a small flag-pole with the hair and the earth and a saja leaf stuck on an ebony stick. They take this to the jungle and a boy holds it while the Siraha recites the names of any suspected causes or people. When the right word is uttered, the flag is said to quiver. At Kakori the villagers go to the boundary and put five heaps of rice in a row, one for Mahapurub, one for witchcraft, one for Mother Earth, one for the ancestors of the house, and one for any local godling who may have been troublesome. The people sit some distance away, and spend the time having their hair done by their relatives-in-law. Presently a crow flies down and pecks at one or other of the piles of rice, thus revealing the cause of death.

The *thumkakri* divination is done with chickens on the second or third day after death. One chicken is taken from the house of the dead and one from

[1] Grigson, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

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778 346 [532]

The buildings vary greatly. Some are solid mud houses with strong doors, others are open sheds, a few stand in substantial compounds of their own with pillars and swings before the entrance. The furniture and symbols inside vary as greatly. In the solid buildings there is generally something that might be damaged by cattle or blown away in a storm—little brass images of horses, elephants and bulls, elaborate litters for Dantesliwari, bunches of peacock feathers. Flags and very small images are wrapped up and put into an earthen pot hung from the roof. The long Gutal poles (with a big bunch of peacock feathers at the top) are slung from the roof, and the Anga Deo are hung on ropes from the roof or placed resting on bamboos. Other symbols of the gods are chains, spears, axes, digging tools, whips of cow-hair, shields.

Fig. 24. Brass horse, made by Ghasia, of a type often placed in Muria shrines *Height 9½"*

In the more open sheds, the symbols of the gods have to be slung high up very near the roof. At the foot of the central pillar there is generally a flat stone which serves as the seat of the god, and there are several big stones placed together to form a hearth for the cooking of the new grain and pulses or sacrificial animals. The gods are often taken out of their temples to be worshipped, at least on all major festivals, but the sacramental cooking is done inside. So you may often see big wooden spoons stuck in the roof. Outside the temple, there may be a swing with a spiked seat on which the mediums can prophesy; there is often a row of wooden pillars, each with a stone seat before it, to which certain visiting gods can be tied, and there may be a stone for special offerings to the dead.

[531]

On the wooden pillars, there are often phallic symbols. At Metawand I saw an elaborately carved vagina showing the clitoris and labia; there are similar carvings at Markabera and Bayanar.

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I will describe one or two representative shrines, for this will give a better idea of them than any general account. At Markabera is the *pen-rawar* of the Wadder clan, and near the temple is a row of menhirs erected for members of the clan who have died in the neighbourhood. But Markabera is not the original *pen-rawar* of this clan. That is at Kakori, where the clan-god, the Anga Bope Harma, has his residence. Many years ago, Bope Harma had a son at Kakori who was named Bhumiriya; two brothers of the Wadder clan lived there as the Dhurwa Pujari. After a time Bope Harma ordered one of the Wadder brothers to go to Markabera and make a new *pen-rawar* there with a temple to Bhumiriya.

The temple is built with nine wooden pillars, fixed in place by the clan-priest who put iron slag at the bottom of each hole. Bundles of grass called *gubbi* were prepared by a Karanga, a clan akin[illegible] to the Wadder clan; mahua flowers and water were offered them and they were tied to the top of the pillars before thatching. The roof was then thatched, but no walls were made. Every ten years, the *pen-rawar* building is renewed.

## MURIA RELIGION

346 Just inside the gate of the enclosure there is a line of pillars and four stone seats. These poles are for the convenience of such visiting deities as are

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FIG. 25. Brass swing, made by Ghasia, of a type often placed in Muria shrines
*Breadth 8½"*

represented by poles or flags and can be tied to the pillars; the stones also are seats for those gods who have a traditional or family right to come to the temple. Such are Kustirmago Pen, a cousin of Bhumiriya, an Ulka god from Kasabahi; Lath Kuar, Bhumiriya's son, a Wadder god from Tadopal; Inde Muitar, a Karanga god of Suhnar and Son Kuar, son of Kanda Dokara, a Maravi god from Garhbangal. Near the gate of the enclosure is another stone of sacrifice where black hens are offered to the dead. One of the pillars is used to tie the buffaloes and bulls which are to be sacrificed to Bhumiriya.

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Entering the temple, we find a clean open shed with broad wooden pillars on which are carved crude representations of the sun and the vagina. Here too are four stone seats. The chief is, of course, for the lord of the temple Bhumiriya himself. The second is for his father Bope Harma who is brought every ten years to sit with his son. The third is for Dhursai Kuar, a son of the Pat Deo in Jagdalpur, who comes at festivals from Timnar, and the fourth is for Lalsai Kuar of Metawand.

From the roof hangs an earthen pot containing little bells and a bundle of peacock feathers. Another pot has in it a piece of cloth used as a flag at festivals. In the roof are ten large wooden spoons, which are used for the

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346 New Eating ceremonies and made ceremonially every ten years, and a large gourd kept for pouring water. Piled round one of the pillars is a heap of dancing-sticks of dhaman wood called Bhumiriya Kolang; these are kept in the shrine for the Pen Kolang dances and at the end of three years are taken to the village boundary and hung up on a rope across the road. There is a *kakam* hunting-horn, not a brass one, but the real horn of a wild buffalo.

883 This description is not irrelevant to a book on the ghotul. The spoons and
796 gourd are used by the chelik, who have the responsibility for cooking at the festivals. The dancing-sticks are made by the chelik and used for their ceremonial dances. The hunting-horn is sounded by chelik to summon the people for festivals. Every visiting deity means a corresponding visit from the chelik and motiari of its village: Markabera is thus in close touch with several villages—Timnar, Metawand, Kokori, Kasabahi, Tadopal, Garhbangal and Suhnar. The Markabera god visits Metawand and Kokori, and possibly other villages. The visits of the gods with their attendant chelik and motiari, many of them of clans different to the Markabera Wadder clan, play a very important part in bringing boys and girls of these villages into touch with one another.

346 In Markabera there was only one temple. In Bayanar there are eight grouped together round a wooded hill covered with fantastic rocks amid which the little shrines are built. A narrow path leads steeply up the hill to the first shrine standing up sharply on a rocky mound of its own. This shrine is the home of Pandi Dokara Gutal (represented by a pole with a bunch of peacock feathers at the end) and his two sons Mundi Kuar Gutal and Lalit Kuar Gutal. The three poles are slung high up beneath the roof, for the shed is an open one. At the foot of the centre pillar of the hut is a stone seat, with gongs and an iron lamp. This is a Naitami shrine and there are two stone hearths at either end of it, one for the clan-priest of the Naitami and the other for the husbands of women in their menstrual periods and women who have very recently given
● [931] birth to a child. On one pillar is a carving of the vagina, on another the sun and moon and a crude horse.

By the little path along the hillside are two sets of pillars with flat stones in front of them to support Pandi Dokara at festivals. A little further on is a small temple for Hinglajin Dokari. This goddess is represented by a closed litter, and there is the usual stone and hearth for her worship.

A little way down the hill is a temple of the Sori clan which houses two more Gutal (poles)—Dawdi Dokara and Lalsai Dokara. Going still further down the hill we reach a large rock on which is a fourth shrine which is empty save for a stone representing Mundi Kuar; this is in charge of a Hindu (Kalar) Pujari from Mungwal.

These little temples on the hillside were curiously impressive; old gods of hill and forest seemed very present there. Down the hill in a shed was a bamboo pole and a flag in an earthen pot representing Son Kuar, the son of the Anga Deo at Narayanpur—another Naitami shrine. One of the most interesting things I saw on this visit was in the temple to Son Kuar. Here was a very small earthen pot tied up in dub grass, in which the *jiwa* of a dead priest was dwelling. For a long time even the Pargana Manjhi hesitated to tell me his name, especially in that potentially dangerous spot, but at last I got it—it was Tota Muria.

We went on towards a great grove of mango trees till we came to a closed temple, again of the Naitami, in which was a characteristic Anga Deo, Baiha the mad god, a stone to represent Bangaram consort of Danteshwari, and two other stones for Kotgudin Matal and Dulardei Matal. Here we were in a definitely Hindu atmosphere. There was a large clay elephant for Bangaram,

*[Description of temple buildings see pp 196-197, cat 116—Andyal]

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as it was under its leaf-cup, they proceed to dig holes to take the four corner pillars of the house. If, as they dig, they come across white ants they move the site. They put four pillars into the holes and tie a garland of mango leaves round them. After this they proceed to build in the usual way.

At Phunder the boys put a grass 'top-knot' on the roof and a small flag, the *chelik-bairag* or Palo Pen, so that 'all might know it was a ghotul'.

Such are the main types of building; what of the decorations and the furniture? These vary greatly from place to place. They are least ornate to the north and east, most carefully imagined and executed in the west central parganas, in the typical Jhoria area.

Doors are sometimes very small, sometimes large and heavy, occasionally of light bamboo, sometimes carved as at Bandopal; sometimes there is no door at all. Often there is an arrangement for shutting the door from inside—a latch falls into a wooden hook attached to the door. But it is interesting that there is no means of shutting the house from outside: the ghotul is never locked up. It is a shrine and so one would steal from it.

As you move west across the centre of the Muria country you find more, and more elaborate carving. The ghotul has stimulated artistic creation, not only in the realm of personal adornment but also in wall-painting and wood-carving. The chelik desire that their ghotul really should be 'lovely as a bison's horns'. In many of the Jhoria ghotul there are excellently carved pillars. These may be seen at Almer, Nayanar, Remawand, Amgaon, Bandopal, Malinar, Kober and elsewhere. At Almer, one of the pillars has *siddari* birds at the top, another has tortoises. On the body of the pillars are carvings of the moon, boys and girls dancing the Hulki, elephants. Down the pillar there are three *pidha*, the seats that are supposed to hold it up. At Amgaon also, each of the pillars has four of these *pidha* 'for the roof to sit on'. At Nayanar, one of the pillars is decorated with tortoises and another has hooded snakes projecting from all four corners. In Malinar, there are carvings on all the pillars—combs beautifully fashioned, a boy with a large phallus, a realistic bow and arrow, a snake. Outside, as at Remawand, there are pillars in the fence with remarkable designs clearly illustrated in Plate LXXII. At Jhakri I saw a fine pillar ingeniously carved to make a wooden ball inside with no way of putting it in or taking it out. At Binjhe too the Sirdar had carved some good pillars and had made windows in the ghotul with serrated bars.

Phallic symbols are very common.[1] In nearly every ghotul there is somewhere the representation of the vagina, often about two feet from the ground

[1] Similar phallic symbols occur in the Juang and Bhuiya and in some Uraon dormitories. The Juang often make a row of breasts right across the main beam of the roof. So do the Kond. Hutton describes carvings of men and women 'in a condition of sexual excitement' in Naga morung.—Hutton, *Diaries*, op. cit., p. 46.

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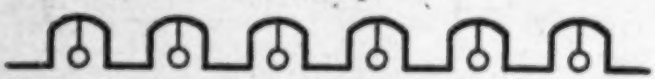
on the central pillar. In the small Kolur ghotul there is one slender pillar covered with carvings of the vagina, as always showing the clitoris, but here there was a double clitoris and a clitoris upside down.

At Markabera there were similar carvings of the vagina with the clitoris.

Often a chelik may be seen with an enormous penis, a motiari in his arms. The boys say that these carvings are very useful as an approach to girls. It may be that the vagina in the central pillar is the relic of a custom now forgotten of initiating smaller boys by pressing them against it.[1]

The walls of the ghotul are often decorated with drawings and paintings. In 1940 there was a fine display in the Remawand ghotul. The following year I saw a frieze of fantastic paintings (illustrated in Plate LXVIII) at More Berma. At Netagaon there were models of motiari, tigers and a monkey. In Urdabera there was a model of a chelik with his motiari, and over the door a mud model of a horse. In Deogaon, there were modellings of a chelik and motiari riding on a horse. At Kuntpadar, one wall was well decorated with drawings of a boy, a vagina, a girl, a bow and arrow and the sun and moon. At Palki there was the representation of a bird trap:



But this might equally well be a sexual symbol, similar to the design of the phallus within the vagina that I noted at Metawand:

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The day-time visitor to a ghotul will find little enough there by way of furniture. Cots are never used; everyone sleeps on the ground. Seats and stools are rare, but in many ghotul are to be found long narrow pieces of wood raised some two inches from the ground. These are the *kutul* which may be used either as seats or pillows. Some are very long and suggest the custom of several boys and girls sleeping together. They are often carved with geometric designs, figures of boys and girls, crude representations of the vagina. I have one with four breasts carved on its under-side. Occasionally you may see a *kutul* with a little drawer hollowed out below for storing necklaces or other ornaments during the night. As far as I know these head-rests are the corporate property

FIG. 54. *Kutul* from Talabera showing small drawer for keeping ornaments. *Length 1' 7"*

[1] A remarkable parallel from an English Public School (Repton) is provided in Denton Welch's *Maiden Voyage* (London, 1943), p. 48. The author is describing the House dormitory. 'Two lips had been painted on one of the beams and all new boys had to

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The pubic hairs, reference to which can be made the most inflammatory of insults, are entirely removed by girls. They are supposed to smear the hairs with wood-ash and pull them out. 'If a woman uses a razor for this', we were told at Phauda, 'she will become very heavy after death, and the men who carry out her body will laugh and say, "She's one of those who used a razor".'[1]

### III. Combs

*Belle marrāte pungār puy ānta*

On a dry tree blossoms a flower—A comb

In the intimate life of chelik and motiari the comb plays a most important part. It is used every night by the motiari when they tidy the hair of the boys. It is used to titillate the skin of back and arms. In many places it is one of the most popular forms of personal adornment. Both boys and girls wear it but it is essentially a girl's possession and a girl's decoration. In Binjhli I remember seeing a row of girls walking in file; each of them had ten or fifteen combs arranged in lines on the left side of the head. But there is no rule about this. Sometimes the combs are in the back hair, sometimes on both sides. Boys wear one or two combs in the turban, or stuck in the back hair.

Different types of comb are illustrated in Figs. 67-70, 74-5, and 80-1. I believe the patterns are simply for decorative purposes and have no magical significance. Thurston has an interesting passage, which unfortunately he does not illustrate, about the strikingly similar designs of the combs of the Negritos of Malacca and the Kadir of the Anaimalai Hills.[2] Preuss had worked out a theory that the patterns were not geometrical, but consisted of a series of hieroglyphics.[3] Thurston, however, believed that the Kadir comb decorations were only conventional. The bamboo combs worn by Semang women are said to be talismans against disease,[4] but neither Kadir nor Muria combs seem to have this meaning. The Muria combs are often carved with phallic symbols—but their aim is not magical, but the very practical one of arousing sexual interest.[5]

For a girl to possess a large number of combs does not necessarily mean that she is specially popular; more probably it implies that she has a very

[1] With this may be compared a Gond proverbial saying recorded in Mandla. 'The bearers lifted up the pubic hairs to make the corpse lighter, but found it made no difference.'

[2] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 276.

[3] K. T. Preuss, 'Die Zauberbilder Schriften der Negrito in Malaya' in *Globus*, 1899. Schebesta, however, considers that this, like the flower-pattern theory of Vaughan Stevens, is 'entirely baseless'. P. Schebesta, 'The Decorative Art of the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula', *JRAS* (1929), p. 749. (See Fig. 76)

[4] W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), Vol. I, pp. 396ff. For the magical significance of the comb, see also J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales* (London, 1890), Vol. I, p. lxxi; L. Garnett, *Greek Folk Poesy* (London, 1896), Vol. II, p. 437. The occurrence of the comb on early Celtic monuments points to the value set on it. See Macculloch, op. cit., p. 180.

[5] In several tribes, the gift of a comb is an essential part of the marriage ceremony. This is so among the Muduvar.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 93. The Kadir bridegroom should always make a comb and present it to his future wife just before marriage or at the end of the ceremony.—Ibid., Vol. III, p. 28. At a Kuki marriage, the priest presents husband and wife with small combs. 'Combs, perhaps these particular combs, are very sacred things. It is very unlucky to lose them, and man and wife only may use the same comb. When a man dies, his comb is buried with him, and his near relations break their combs and must roam with dishevelled hair for a few days before they renew them.'—Dalton, op. cit., p. 47.

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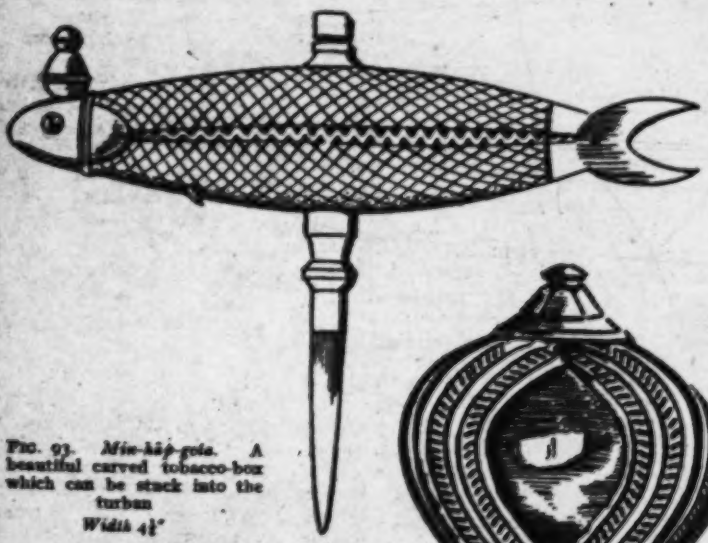

FIG. 93. *Mīn-kāp-gola.* A beautiful carved tobacco-box which can be stuck into the turban
*Width* 4½"

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FIG. 94. *Puda-gola*, with an obvious representation of the vagina
*Height* 3½"

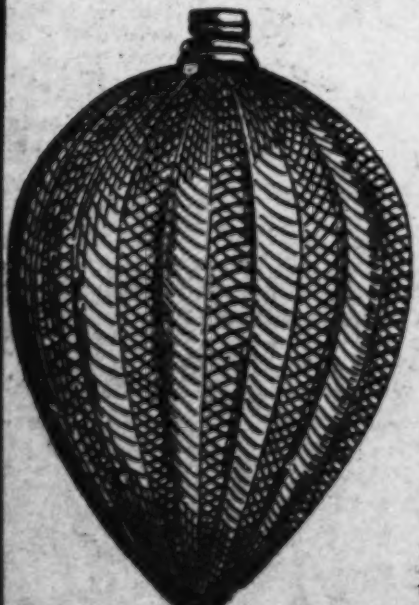

FIG. 95. Tobacco-box from Panjori decorated with carvings supposed to represent the bones of the *mīn* fish
*Height* 4½"

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pipes. These are lit with little bits of glowing coal picked from the fire, and when half-smoked or not in use are generally kept tucked into the turban or hidden in a hole in the ghotul wall.

But the chelik do not rely only on the tobacco supplied them in the ghotul. Any enterprising boy has tucked into his loin-cloth or hanging (sometimes with a bunch of bells or cowries) at his waist a specially-made tobacco-pouch. These *gota* are, as a glance at the illustrations in Figs. 82-4, 93-5, 99, 103-4, and 109-14 will show, elaborate and varied. They are of every size and shape. One is like a fish, another carved like a wheel, a third resembles a mango. Some are of garud, moda or koraya wood, others are cut from the kernel of a fruit, a few are of brass. The stoppers are fitted tightly with a little lac. Some are covered with the testes of a goat or sambhar. Most are elaborately carved.

Many of the *gota*-pouches are named. There is the *dudong-gota*, round as a girl's breast; the *chakka-gota* (Fig. 77), a beautifully carved wheel; the *hemul*, or tortoise pouch (Fig. 79) with its elaborate designs; the charming *marka-batta-gota* (Fig. 112) shaped like a mango; the *kalāri-gota* (Fig. 83); the *min-hīp-gota*, with its decoration of fish bones; the *tumur-gota*, whose carving resembles the flowers of the ebony tree; the *girna* or lizard *gota* (Fig. 82); and the *damera-āching-singār gota* (Fig. 110) with its elaborate silver decorations. Some of the *gota* have a deliberately sexual purpose; the *pude-gota* (Figs. 94 and 99) has small representations of the vagina carved on it and the *dudo-muri* (Fig. 101) has marks that are supposed to resemble the pimples round the nipples of a woman's breast. The chelik show these to girls to excite them. But, indeed, as I show in another chapter, to ask for tobacco is itself a polite way of asking a girl for sexual congress.

The Muria grow tobacco in specially fenced gardens near their houses and sometimes in enclosures made on the banks of stream or river. When it is ready, it is cut and allowed to dry in the garden. Then it is placed between layers of kodon straw 'which turns it red in a few days'. After this it is dried again, this time on the roof of the house, and finally tied up in bundles with home-made string.

## VI. The Sleeping-mat

The *gik* or *masni*-mat is an important piece of ghotul furniture. When a boy joins the ghotul for the first time he is expected to bring a mat which is usually made for him by his mother or an aunt. Later on, especially in the *jodidār* ghotul, a girl ought always to make a mat for her special chelik, but elsewhere the mats seem to be made by a boy's mother, sister or some other female relative. At a marriage a new mat is usually presented to the bridegroom.

The mat is not difficult to make. A rectangle is marked out and pegs driven into the ground at its four corners. Bits of bamboo are tied between the pegs at opposite ends of the rectangle and a dozen or more strings of hemp or grass are tied from one end to the other so as to form the warp. Before they are attached, they are threaded through the holes of the *ārh*, a wooden instrument illustrated in Fig. 96 which is used to beat the grass into place. The woman sits down with the *ārh* before her and threads bits of reed or grass over and under the strings. After she has threaded two or three she sprinkles them with water and pulls the *ārh* sharply towards her several times, thus pressing the grass into position. This is done over and over again until finally the mat is complete.

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## PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

These mats are kept at home and boys or girls bring them rolled up under their arms at night to the ghotni. In some villages this is the special duty of the girls. When they arrive they go round saluting the boys and presenting them with their mats. This is known as *Masni-johar*.

Fig. 96. The wooden dish used for making a *masni*-mat
*Length 2' 10"*

The mat is very definitely a sexual symbol and many ribald jokes are connected with it. The new mat given to a bridegroom at his marriage is generally smeared with oil 'to make it slippery'. Once when I was sitting down in the village of Angaon a chelik brought me a *masni* but an old man said, 'Don't sit on it, it is covered with semen', and everyone thought it very amusing. It is supposed to be a great honour to be given a mat by the chelik, probably just because it is a symbol of so much excitement and romance.

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At midnight the umagaji bird cried *Ha hubu*. The girl shrieked with fright and said, 'O Lakari, let me sleep near you, for I am afraid'. Then the bird cried again and the girl said, 'What is the bird saying?' Lakari replied, 'It says "Drive on, drive on!"'. So now there was no mother, no father, there was no one in the world, and he went to her. From the bird's talk came the boy's copulation. Every time the bird cried, the girl clung again to Lakari.

In this way Lakari took each of the girls in turn, and at last every one was pregnant and he had seven score sons. When the boys were old enough to earn their living, Lakari got bullocks for them. In this way family life began and villages were formed, because a girl was frightened of a bird.

### II. The Anatomy and Mythology of Sex

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The Muria seem to have a rather sketchy knowledge of the sexual organs and their functions. They have no idea of the purpose of the testes or of the existence of the hymen. They do, however, recognize the clitoris and understand its function. Their vocabulary is limited, but sufficient to cover the main points of the external genitalia.[1] They have half-a-dozen words for the penis, three or four for the vagina (the most popular simply means 'the lower part of something'), and words for the labia majora (*pude adawing*, vagina flesh), the urethra (*urkul bukha*, urine hole) and the clitoris (*titigute*, a word which like its Graeco-English equivalent probably has reference to the organ's power of erection and excitement). The Muria word for orgasm is *pusi* or *wijja pesina*, 'the coming out of the seed'.

There is no word for love in Gondi. The Muria use the Chhattisgarhi word *mâya* and sometimes *pirit* or *parem*, which are simply corruptions of the ordinary Hindi words. But neither do they have any words for lust or desire, and for erotic excitement use expressions that are only descriptive of the physical sensations of sex—*penda hohalta* said of a girl means that her 'vagina is itching'; *bondę dohalta* that the 'penis is quivering'. The expression *girda hiyâna* is sometimes used for 'making love'; *girda* means 'pleasure' or 'liking'. *Girda ator* can be used in the sense of 'being in love'. But abstract and emotional terms are rare in Gondi, as in most primitive languages.

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Sexual riddles are interesting as showing how direct and forthright are the Muria's references to the genitals and sexual intercourse.

*Chapti pakna gohivailaiteh.*
The flat stone itches.

—The vagina.

*Sulung dandi bundle burna.*
The pole is long, its bottom is black.

—The penis.

*Kondâng lawa boteng.*
The fish that has no eyes.

—The penis.

[1] I notice that our authorities often confuse the names of the genitalia, perhaps because the tribes themselves, like the British and French, use a bewildering variety of synonyms for them. Ward gives as Gondi words *prest* or *munchelna* for the 'affections', *mujâ halatur* for 'beloved', and *mahilla* for 'to kiss'. There are no such words in Trench's vocabulary.

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## THE MURIA'S ATTITUDE TO SEX

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*Itwa lewa patwa tado.*
Touch it and up it goes.
—A mat, or the penis.

*Mela aur jela bahir jhula*
*Mantor kach kutile lopa narey kiyāntor.*
Mela and Jela swing to and fro outside;
The iron rice-husker is at work within.
—Sexual congress.

Three are dancing in a thick jungle.
—Sexual congress.

There are two witnesses to this thief's escapades.
—The testes and penis.

But if their anatomical knowledge of the genitalia is slight, the Muria compensate for it by an extensive mythology of sex, which is, I think, even more elaborate than that of the Bison-horn Maria and the Orissa tribes. 831

It is remarkable that the Muria seem to regard the sexual organs, whether male or female, as living things with an independent life of their own.[1] For example, one of the reasons given for forbidding urination inside the ghotul is that the girls' urine would smell abominably because her labia majora are always chewing her urine as she walks about—just as a goat chews its food, and therefore a girl's urine smells as strongly as a goat's.

There are several stories about the vagina, though the Vagina Dentata legend, known throughout the Central Provinces and Orissa, is comparatively rare. The following story is from Masora. 831 539

Long ago the vagina had the power of leaving its body at night and going out to feed in the fields. It had teeth with which it could eat; it would stay out all night grazing in the fields and return satisfied in the morning.

By and by the village people began to say, 'What is this thing that comes at night and eats up our crops? Let us set traps and catch it'. So they set traps in their fields, and that night when the vaginae came to feed they were caught and the villagers collected them and took them to the Gaita's house in a big basket. They shut them up in an inner room and went to report the matter to the Raja. The Raja sentenced the vaginae to be hanged.

When they heard this, the villagers were frightened, for they said, 'How are we to live with our wives if their organs are destroyed?' So they went to the Raja asking him to forgive them and promising to repay the owners of the fields for whatever damage had been done.

The Raja said, 'First of all the teeth must be broken and removed from the vaginae. Whoever can do this will be rewarded'. No one knew how to do it until at last a one-eyed policeman, who himself had a knife growing from his penis, declared that he would deal with the matter. With his knife he removed the teeth and then with hammer and nails fixed every vagina back in its place. The nail he used is the clitoris which stands above the vagina to hold it steady. The vaginae then cursed the man who had done them this injury and turned him

[1] A similar idea is found in the Crow Indian tale *Montsla Lequesa*, where a man's penis begins to talk and refuses to stop.—R. H. Lowie, 'Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians', *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. XXV (1922), p. 225.

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into a pig. Even today the pig's virile member is shaped like a knife.[1]

A rather similar tale from Palari (Kondagaon Tahsil) connects the incident with Bhimul and his wife.

> The vagina used to creep out of the body where it lived and go in search of maize and cucumbers. It would nibble its way through a fence and steal from the field. The farmers made fences of iron and now when the vagina tried to get through, its teeth were knocked out by the iron. A small bit of iron stuck in the vagina's mouth and became the clitoris. When the teeth came out, blood flowed from the mouth and the vagina went to Bhimul for help.
>
> Now the penis of Bhimul was five hands long and he cut it into several pieces, each four fingers long. He put one piece into the vagina's mouth and said, 'Don't eat cucumbers or maize any more: from today this will be your food'. But the bleeding did not stop, and Bhimul said, 'It will stop soon and then after a month it will bleed again'. Such was the beginning of women's menstruation.
>
> There was blood at the end of Bhimul's penis where he had cut it. It went into the belly of the woman to whom the vagina belonged and she conceived. This is how the birth of children began.
>
> In those days men had no genitals. One day they went to Bhimul to complain about this. He fixed a bit of his own penis with wax between the thighs of a man. Such was the beginning. But the penis fell off as the wax melted. They went to Gorondi Dokari (Bhimul's wife) and she put two small chickens under the penis to support it. Such is the origin of the testes.[2]

Another Vagina Dentata story comes from Koelari.[3]

> There was a Rakshasa's daughter with teeth in her vagina. She used to live mostly as a tigress and kept ten or twelve tigers always with her. When she saw a man, she would turn into a pretty girl, seduce him, cut off his penis, eat it herself and give the rest of his body to her tigers.
>
> One day she met seven brothers in the jungle and married the eldest so that she could sleep with them all. After some time she took the eldest boy to where her tigers lived, made him lie with her, cut off his penis, ate it and gave his body to the tigers. In the same way she killed six of the brothers till only the youngest was left.
>
> When his turn came, the god who helped him appeared in a dream saying, 'If you go with this girl, make an iron tube, put it into her vagina and break her teeth'. The boy acted according to his dream, and when the tigers came for his body, he climbed into a mango tree

[1] Similar stories among the Bison-horn Maria relate how a man once caught a vagina eating his gram and knocked its teeth out with a pestle; in another tale, from Kamell, people used to feed the wandering vagina out of charity. When it was satisfied it would open its mouth and do men no harm. Even now the vagina has not forgotten its old habit of eating *gur* and gram and still tries to 'bite' the male member by its muscular contractions.

[2] Elsewhere the Muria said, 'The testes are the children of the penis and have sapped their father's strength. Only when the children restore the strength can their father work'.

[3] I present a large number of similar legends recorded from the Gond and Pardhan of the Central Provinces, the Bison-horn Maria of Bastar, and the Juang, Gadaba and Savara of Orissa in my forthcoming book *Myths of Middle India*.

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and made himself very small. The tigers chased him and the girl too became very angry. He cursed her; 'Let nothing but your face remain'. And so it was; she became a bat which eats, excretes, urinates and copulates through one and the same hole. One of the mangoes opened and the boy crept inside. A parrot carried off the mango to the Raja's palace.

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The parrot dropped the fruit, it broke open, out came the boy and after various adventures married the Raja's daughter. The hero of an Agaria story was similarly saved by the use of an iron condom.[1]

Sometimes it is said that originally the vagina was situated below the knee of the left leg. One day a chicken pecked at it, and it jumped up to a place of safety between the thighs where it has remained ever since. But it was wounded and blood still flows from it every month. From Bara Dongar comes the tale of the vagina which died.

One day a vagina died and its companions were wondering what to do with it. 'Shall we cremate it or bury it?' said some, but others said, 'Let us divide it among us'. They cut it up and each stuck a portion on itself. This is the origin of the lips [labia majora]. The woman whose vagina died was the first hermaphrodite.

In the same style is a story from Alor, which has the familiar competition-motif.

The breasts and the vagina had a quarrel. 'I am the greater,' said the vagina. 'It is for my sake that men go mad and die.'

'No,' said the breasts. 'We are greater. It is our beauty that men come to see. If there were no breasts, who would come to you?'

'If there was no vagina, who would bother about you? Do men chase a flower or a lovely stream?'

'Men see us from afar and excited by our beauty draw near. It is only then that they notice you; first they touch us, then you.'

'But no one gets pleasure from touching you.'

'But if they didn't see and touch us, how would they be excited? You would be neglected entirely.'

So quarrelling, the vagina and the breasts parted and went their ways. As they went along, the breasts met a man and he took them aside and began to fondle them. But when he looked down and saw nothing there, he went disappointed away.

Then the breasts went to the vagina and said, 'Come, sister, you have won the battle; you are the greatest of all'.

There are also legends about the penis. Originally it was of gigantic size.

Once the penis was so long that as a man lay in bed it could get out of the house and penetrate a woman a hundred yards away. When he went abroad, a man would wind it round and round his waist and tuck in the end.

One day a penis broke through the wall of the house, entered a woman, came out of her mouth, dipped its head into a cooking-pot and ate all the supper, and in withdrawing killed the woman. Then all the women

[1] For a discussion of this legend, see my article 'The Vagina Dentata Legend', *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Vol. XIX (1943), pp. 439–53. For accounts of its distribution in North America, see W. Boggess, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. IV (New Series), p. 667 and R. H. Lowie, 'The Test-Theme in North American Mythology', *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*, Vol. XXI (1908), p. 110.

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came to cut it off. The man grasped his penis with his hand, but that was all he could save. The women cut it off and it is now only a hands-breadth long.[1]

Another version of the tale, however, connects the disappearance of the long penis with the Vagina Dentata legend.

> In the old days there were teeth far back in the vagina. One day when the long penis went in, the teeth cut it and all that remained was a stump of its present length. Angry at this, the man brought a rice-husker and broke off the teeth. In those days the penis itself was covered with thorns; it stood up like a semur tree. But there were no thorns at the root. The thorny part was cut off, and the smooth part remains to this day.[2]

In this mythical past it was man, not woman, who was subject to a menstrual period.

> Formerly men had to live outside their houses every month. They used to tie hollow bamboos over the penis to catch the blood. One day a girl saw this and laughed at the man. He pulled the bamboo off and threw it at her.[3] Since then women have suffered this flowing of the blood instead of men.

### III. Erotic Attractiveness

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I found it very difficult to get the Muria to give any clear account of what they meant by beauty. They are always moved by the loveliness of natural scenery, but they are not very articulate and find it hard to express themselves except when the words of a song or proverb provide them with a ready means of utterance. The following Chitkul Pata from Amakot, for example, reveals not a little aesthetic appreciation.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Jilāng jāpar bandār!* | How beautiful the lake! |
| *Bandār soba bīrāng?* | Why is the lake so beautiful? |
| *Bandār soba pāri,* | Lovely are the banks of the lake, |
| *Bandār soba yero.* | Lovely the waters of the lake. |
| *Yero soba mīnur.* | Lovely are the fish in the water. |
| *Mīnur soba bīrāng?* | To the fish what is lovely? |
| *Mīnur soba sila.* | To the fish the water-reeds are lovely. |
| *Pārar soba bīrāng?* | On the bank what is lovely? |
| *Pārar soba marka.* | On the bank the mango trees, |
| *Kāndi udo marka,* | The mango's spreading branches, |
| *Waliya mātō gorga.* | And the palm trees everywhere. |

In human beings the Muria seem to admire liveliness, animation, vigour more than perfection of colour or feature. They apply their universal test of hard work not only to assess a person's morals, but even his erotic attractiveness. 'However beautiful the face, one's eyes turn aside disgusted from a loafer.'

[1] The Bison-horn Maria attribute this incident to a man named Baikesa and say that he himself cut off his long penis through shame when it touched a woman not his wife by mistake. He died to death and was buried in a sitting posture. He is still honoured as Baikesa Pen with a pile of stones in many villages.

[2] But the Bison-horn Maria of Dugali said that the penis became short because in olden times the Mahara had none at all and went to Gaja Bhimal to beg for one. He cut off the long part from the Maria, but they held the stems in their fists. This is why the Maria have nothing to do with the Mahara for fear they lose the rest of the organ.

[3] For this reason, it is said, the Bison-horn Maria pelt a girl with mud at her first menstruation.

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and in their maturity reveal new opportunities. Chelik and motiari are then disturbed, devastated, broken just like anyone else; they fall in love. 'The best love is the first; that is the work of a madman. The rest is the result of an arrangement.' How do boys set about satisfying their passion? And even when it is far less intense than this, how do they approach a new girl whom they desire to win? How do they even persuade the girl with whom they regularly sleep to allow them consummation—for in most ghotul, though a girl is bound to sleep with one of the chelik, she need not have congress with him unless she wants to.

Love-making begins, said a chelik at Bandopal, 'with laughing, smiling and dancing together. Then we arrange to meet in the fields or forest, perhaps by a stream. The boy gives her a carved comb. She steals a little money from her parents, and buys beads to make him a necklace. When it is dark she gives it to him. He wears it at night, but in the day he keeps it carefully hidden.'

In the remote approach to the beloved, gifts play an important part. The chelik make hair-pins, wooden blocks for the back hair, pretty little combs and small tobacco-pouches. The motiari respond with bead-necklaces, head-bands, ear-pendants, and even mats. Mirrors are popular gifts on either side. The gift of a comb is regarded as a sign that one's intentions are really serious; in some ghotul it may not be given directly, but must pass through the Kotwar's hands so that he may keep a check on ghotul romance. Some girls accumulate a great number of these ornaments; it does not necessarily mean that they have many, but rather that they have devoted, lovers. The Likhen of Kanhargaon made twelve combs for his beloved Surtao; when she danced, she used to remove them and give them to him for safe keeping.

[831] Many of these gifts promote a chelik's suit not only by pleasing the girl, but by a more direct solicitation. The boys carve tiny symbols of the vagina or of a penis in erection, they draw breasts and even the pimples round the areola. They make these drawings or carvings on combs or tobacco pouches, and on the walls or pillars of the ghotul and on trunks of trees in the forest. Sometimes they carve breasts on the wooden pillows they use at night. These symbols, they say, often make it easier to open a conversation.

When girls fall in love with boys, they show their devotion by doing things for them. They take their dirty clothes to the stream for washing. They do their hair with special attention. They carry their drums. They bring secret presents of liquor or tobacco from their homes. They go to the jungle for little gifts of fruit. Such attentions quickly win the chelik's heart.

The pangs and sorrows of frustrated love are rarely, I think, experienced. Even where desire is strong, it is tempered by the great range of sexual opportunity. 'Is there a lack of tigers in the jungle?' A girl who is attracted by a boy but who, for some reason, cannot win him, says philosophically enough, 'What is the use of rice in someone else's grain-bin?' and finds another lover. A boy says, 'If not today, I will plough the field tomorrow'.

### VI

Such is the remote approach to what the Muria regard as the really important thing in human relations, sexual congress. We must now consider the more immediate approach to this critical and definite expression of love, without which no friendship can be real.

Motiari are often shy and unwilling; they are afraid of pregnancy; sometimes they are just not interested in that particular boy; they are well aware

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So thinking, he tied a sickle to his nose as a beak, bound a winnowing-fan on each arm, put a broom on his bottom. There he was, a bird. He mounted his wife from behind, flapping his wings and crying *kar-kar-kar*. But he knocked over a lamp, set fire to the house and was burnt to death.

A chelik and motiari generally agree to have congress at the time of the massage. When the girl lays the chelik's hand on her shoulder so that she can massage his arm, he squeezes it in a certain manner. This is how the Kotwar of Chandabera described it.

They have agreed on it. They lie down together on the mat. He has his hand on her breast, but that means nothing. When all are asleep, he makes the sign. I cannot tell you what it is, but we all know it. She says 'Go away' but he knows she means yes. He doesn't kiss her or touch any part of her, save her breasts and shoulders. He raises himself and separates her legs. She at once unties her cloth. When he is on her, she puts his organ in its place with her hand. She says nothing, nor does he. They are very quiet. He must do it hard; unless you sweat, unless your rut (*masti*) leaves you, you are not satisfied. She says, 'Push on, push on (*alena, alena*)'. She won't let him go till she is satisfied. At last the word *Hai* comes from both their lips. They are no more drunken. *Eho lela hewde raiyār aske hong dayār*. When it goes out through her ears, her temper is cooled.

Bindo, the old Muria of Benur, recalled a love affair of sixty years ago.

I used to sleep with the Malko in the ghotul. Though she would be lying by my side, I did not go to her at first, for I was the head of the ghotul and thought I oughtn't to. But after two or four days, Malko caught hold of my penis and put it between her thighs. Even then I did nothing. Then the girl got very angry and refused to sleep with me for some days. But at last she came again to my mat and this time I went to her. After that we often had intercourse together.

This elementary form of masturbation by girls is known as *dinga-dinga* and seems to be common. But it must be noted that it is a preparation for normal intercourse and not (as so often in Africa) a substitute for it. In Masora the chelik said that 'when a motiari wants a boy, she catches hold of his penis and plays with it till he goes to her'.

The function of the clitoris is not unknown. It is usually prominently portrayed in drawings or carvings of the vagina. Its history is traced in the myths. To the male storyteller, it is a slightly ludicrous object, a parody of the penis, and a mention of it never fails to raise a laugh. In intercourse, said a Muria at Sirpuri, 'the clitoris becomes violently agitated when it sees the penis approaching'. The Antar of Masora said, 'When it sees the penis coming, the clitoris smiles'.

The Muria believe it is the woman who takes the lead and sets the pace. A curious illustration of this is the fact that, contrary to what I believe to be the almost universal practice in village India, the girl herself undoes her pubic cloth.[1] Elsewhere this is considered immodest in a girl and unmanly in her

[1] 'The folds of the sari which are tied in the front are called *tirani*, which is a very significant word in Indian love-making. The knot of the sari is to be untied by the man when the lovers unite.'—D. Bhagwat, *Folk-songs from the Satpura Valleys* (Bombay, 1940), p. xx.

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## MORAL STANDARDS IN THE GHOTUL

In Kuntpedar, the people stressed the virtue of a democratic outlook, the estimating of everyone as equal to yourself. In Metawand, they thought more of generosity. To help a man in need and be kind to those who come to you in trouble is the sign of a good man. Courage is also admired, but not specially so. Yet it is said of Kurwal Kumoti of Palki that 'where the English only venture into the jungle armed with guns and protected by many people, he goes anywhere without a weapon and has no fear of bears or tigers'.

Is sexual morality in our Western sense an ingredient of the good man's character? When I have raised this point in conversation, the reply has always referred to forbidden relations. 'The greatest sin'—this is the view of Lakmu of Masora—'is to have something to do with your younger brother's wife. Or for a girl to have intercourse with a Ganda.' Elsewhere, in several villages, I was told how serious it was to break the laws of exogamy, to have intercourse with a forbidden relation and to commit adultery. In Masora, when I asked if they thought it wrong for the unmarried to have intercourse with each other, for a long time they could not understand the question. When they did, they answered, 'Only if he sleeps with the same girl too often: he must change'.

Here then we have a general picture of the moral qualities that are considered desirable and the vices that are deplored. Let us now come nearer to the ghotul. 'In the ghotul no sin can be committed.' This is not strictly true, but it is sufficiently true to explain the wonderful innocence and simplicity of the chelik and motiari. There is no sin in sex, provided—as I have said before—sexual relations are enjoyed with the right people, at the right time, in the right place and in the right way.

Chelik and motiari must choose the right partner. They must strictly avoid the inner circle of forbidden relatives. Intercourse within the clan is forbidden, but is not regarded as very serious so long as no one knows about it and it does not result in pregnancy. In the *jodidār* ghotul, chelik and motiari must be faithful to one another; in the other, they must avoid too great attachments to special individuals. It is practically unknown for a motiari to have an affair with someone outside the tribe. One of the first lessons taught to a young girl in the ghotul is that she must avoid Ghasia, Ganda, Mahara and Lohar. It is probably safe to say that no European has ever had anything to do with a Muria girl, and I am told by State officials that in the old days when, in the more 'advanced' areas round Jagdalpur, it was the custom for the village headman to bring women for touring subordinates, this was never done in the ghotul villages of the north. I am told that chaprasis, forest guards and constables, who are sometimes such a menace to rural virtue, are never able to seduce the motiari of the ghotul, where the village dormitory remains to protect tribal honour. This opinion is confirmed by the fact that venereal disease is almost unknown among the Muria. In fact, the Chief Medical Officer of the State, Dr W. P. S. Mitchell, has told me that in thirty years' service he had never seen a straight case of venereal disease among the Bastar aboriginals.

The rules governing the sexual life of the ghotul are strict and appear to be generally observed. Breaches of the rules are sufficiently rare to be talked of for many years and to be severely punished.

But sexual intercourse must not only be with the right people: it must be at the right time. It is tabooed before the greater festivals, before a hunting expedition, during the Pus Kolang dance and, most important of all, during a girl's menstrual period.

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X883 834 It is also tabooed in certain places. Intercourse should occur within the ghotul walls, within the supernatural fence that protects from evil. It is often considered wrong, however, for a boy to have intercourse in the presence of a relation whom he is supposed to avoid. In the ghotul where they 'pair off', for example, an elder brother should not have intercourse in the presence of his younger brother's motiari. He should do it in one of the other huts. It would also be very wrong indeed, and be likely to attract tigers to the village, for a chelik and motiari to sleep together on the platform from which the boys watch the ripening crops. Moreover one must always be careful to choose a place which is not haunted by a god or ghost. In Kajen the boys and girls of the ghotul go every year at the Pupul Pandum sacrifice to what is now known as the Chelik-tarni Dongar. Long ago they went there to practise the Cherta and camped beneath a great rock. One of the chelik took a motiari apart and had intercourse with her. They knew it was dangerous, for they immediately offered a small sacrifice to the demon of the hill. When they rejoined the party, an orphan boy (whom the others were treating unkindly by refusing to let him join them) cried, 'You take care, the rock will fall on you'. They laughed saying, 'What does he know?' 'Then one rock spoke to another rock, "These children have done wrong; let us fall upon them".' The orphan boy climbed on one of the rocks and sat on the top. Suddenly it fell and covered all those chelik and motiari.' When the people came, called by the orphan boy, they found nothing but a banyan tree already growing from the foot of a motiari which was sticking out of the debris.

Lastly, sexual relationships must be conducted in the proper manner. 'When there is consent and love there is never sin.' But it is considered very wrong to force a girl to the act against her will. Such cases of ghotul-rape are not common. It must be remembered that for a motiari to sleep with a boy does not mean that she is prepared to have sexual intercourse with him. The younger girls sleep for years in the arms of boys with nothing more than a little erotic play. Only after the menarche do they begin to have regular sexual congress. If then a boy forces a girl against her will, and the others hear of it, he is fined.

X883 839 838 Sexual deviations are almost unknown. Bestiality is regarded as a crime of civilization, unworthy of a Muria. The devious course of modern European sexuality would seem horrible to so straightforwardly heterosexual a tribe. Homosexuality, which Stekel has called 'the insoluble problem of modern civilized man'[1] is no problem to the uncivilised Muria. 'Jealousy and homosexuality are the two primary causes of the disorder of our passions',[2] says this same scientific observer of the European scene. Will not even the reformer admit the advantage of a tribe which is so largely free from these two evils?

X883 831 So long as sexual relations do not overstep these boundaries of good taste and morals, there is nothing wrong in them. Sex is a good thing, healthy, beautiful, interesting, the crown and climax of love. Love indeed is meaningless, inconceivable without it. It is right and good for a chelik to love his motiari and to lie with her. Such is the simple Muria philosophy.

This accounts for the delightful freedom from self-consciousness that is one of the most remarkable things about ghotul life. When after a visit to the Kongera ghotul, Walter Kaufmann exclaimed 'This is the cleanest place I've ever been in' I think he meant that. There is no sniggering, there is nothing cheap or nasty, there is nothing furtive about the relations of these

[1] W. Stekel, 'Jealousy' in Psychoanalysis, op. cit., p. 361. [2] Ibid., p. 366.

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boys and girls. They dance clasped in each other's arms; they go about together, chelik with his arm round the neck of motiari. How revealing are Plates LXXV and XCI. In one a chelik lies on a cot with his arm on his motiari's shoulder, while she sits almost on top of him making leaves. They were not posed for the photo, and they showed no embarrassment at my approach with the mysterious camera, even though they were from a village I did not know well. In the other Plate two chelik and a motiari are listening to the gramophone outside my tent. They are completely absorbed in it and in each other. One of the boys embraces the girl with both his arms. You would not see this natural innocence in the more 'advanced' parts of aboriginal India.

But this refreshing freedom never degenerates into immodesty in public. It would be unthinkable for a chelik to dance naked—as I have seen older men do—in the presence of women or of his elders. The motiari never indulge in the cheerful vulgarity of the old women at a wedding. A chelik never catches hold of a girl immodestly in general company, though he will embrace her and walk with his arms about her. The great festival dances, though the air is full of romantic suggestion and the older men dance with the greatest licence, are conducted by chelik and motiari with complete decorum.

The sympathetic reader will realize how hopeless it is to bring our cut-and-dried judgements of sexual morality to bear upon a situation such as this. But he will also realize that even on his own standards the ghotul cannot be called immoral in the sense that it has no rules or laws or that it ignores those it has. Its regulations are as far-reaching and as strict as our own, and they are often better kept. For the rules are not imposed from without, but have been made by the ghotul-members themselves. Thus they are reasonable, adapted to the actual situation, and so easy to obey.

It is curious that while a Western visitor to a Muria village, if he is of a Puritan turn, will probably be chiefly concerned about the pre-nuptial relations of the children, the Hindu visitor—who is, of course, by far the more frequent—will be scandalized by the casual attitude of the Muria towards cows. Many years ago earnest efforts were made by Hindu reformers in the State to stop cow-sacrifice, and still today—though the majority of State officials preserve an admirable restraint in interfering with tribal customs—landlords, merchants, schoolmasters and travellers do what they can to put an end to the practice. But, except for a few centres where Hindu influence is strong, bulls and cows continue to be sacrificed and eaten all over the northern part of the State. The Muria cannot believe that this is wrong, for the gods demand it. There is nothing in their culture or mythology to forbid it—and indeed we here have a good example of the difficulty of importing a new idea into a system that has no provision for it. Yet if the Muria ever does ponder about 'moral' problems it is this that perplexes him and not any question about pre-nuptial chastity.

Stealing is generally condemned, but it is licensed on some special occasions. The chelik are expected to steal a cock when they take the newly-wedded bride and bridegroom to bed; they appear to have similar licence when they perform ceremonial dances round the village.

The incidence of crime is very low. An experienced police officer, who had served in the ghotul area for twelve years, told me that in all this time there had been no case of murder, riot, assault, hurt, or rape in connexion with the ghotul. There has not been a single case of rape against a Muria, though non-aboriginals have been arrested for raping Muria women. It is a remarkable thing that most of the crime in the Kondagaon and Narayanpur Tahsils occurs

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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697 killed his wife, and of Marvi Kuma who described how much he missed his wife and children and was always wondering whether they got enough food to eat. Vetti Rupe told me that he was continually thinking of his family. Dasru, himself a magician, was worried because in prison there was no Siraha to consult about the various untoward things that happened. The three men who had been sentenced from Pinna Bheji and whom I met after their release said, 'The worst thing was we always were thinking of our cattle and our homes, and to feel that we had got into prison by accident. We could hardly eat for the memory of our children'.

697 836 839 These aboriginal prisoners are remarkable in not finding sex a problem while they are in jail. This statement will probably be received with incredulity by many of my readers. I can only say that I have gone into the matter as fully as anyone could who was not himself a jail official or a prisoner setting out to investigate this particular point. The jail officials, who know their people at least as well as officials elsewhere, some of whom have had very long experience, have told me that cases of homosexuality are unknown and that even masturbation is not practised by the aboriginal prisoners. When I have discussed the same matter with released convicts they have all said the same thing, and I am inclined to believe them, because they have shown no reticence in speaking freely and even coarsely about other sexual matters. I think it is possible that the Maria who in his natural state is, as far as I can discover, completely innocent of any kind of sexual deviation simply would not think it possible that any substitute could give him satisfaction or indeed could be practised. The thing just would not occur to him.[1]

697 831 What is generally believed is that medicine is put in the food. I do not suggest this is so, but it is what is supposed. One after another has described how he never got any erection at all while in jail, and several people have found themselves impotent for a time after their release. Barse Mata of Gamawada declared that he had never even felt

[1] It would be hard to imagine a greater contrast to this than, for example, the conditions described by J. F. Fishman in his *Sex in Prison* (London, 1935).

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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697 desire while in jail. Boti of Telam declared that the doctor
831 had made them all impotent by medicine put in the food. On the other hand, Pandru of Chichari said that he frequently suffered from erections in jail and from nocturnal emissions. Naturally, however, the worst thing about jail-life is the deprivation of the company of women, though many Maria would modify this by saying that it is rather the whole family atmosphere, houses, children, cattle as well as the wife, that was missed. When I asked one youth what jail-life was like, he said, 'No wife, no bazaar, no children, no family'. But the thing that most oppressed him in jail was the silence.

697 The food in jail is excellent, far better than the prisoners get in their own homes. Since 1935, a special effort has been made to improve the health of the prisoners among whom at one period there had been a rather heavy mortality. The result has been highly satisfactory. There was only 1 death in 1938, 2 in 1939 and 4 in 1940. Accommodation in the jail is for 308 prisoners and the daily average is between 210 and 230. Special measures are taken against respiratory diseases, notably influenza. Phyrnoderma (toad-skin), which was one of the chief causes of reduced vitality among aboriginal prisoners, has been practically banished by the prophylactic administration of meat and cod liver oil. The ex-convicts generally grumble at the food and declare that they are continually unwell, but all reports agree in saying that they actually eat heartily and keep very fit. I think the real fact is that the food is unfamiliar to them and tha' many of them suffer from nervousness and a general psychic depression which makes them feel wretched, even though their actual bodily health is excellent. Several prisoners have declared how they long for roots and the gruels prepared in the ordinary way at home.

697 The work given to the prisoners varies. Some of the
564 Maria work in the kitchens, and it is interesting that the Hindu prisoners respect their social status and agree to eat from them. Ghasia and Panka are not admitted into the jail kitchen. Maria and Muria do not do sweepers' work in the jail,[1] though when a man is hanged Maria prisoners deal

[1] But I believe that Gond prisoners in the Central Provinces are made to work as sweepers, a thing that should never be allowed.